Dark Hollow

By Anna Katharine Green

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SYNOPSIS.

A curious crowd of neighbors invade the mysterious home of Judge Ostrander, county judge and eccentric recluse, following a veiled woman who proves to be the widow of a man tried before the judge and electrocuted for murder years before. Her daughter is engaged to the judge's son, from whom he is estranged, but the murder is between the lovers. She plans to clear her husband's memory and asks the judge's aid. Deborah Scoville reads the newspaper clippings telling the story of the murder of Algernon Etheridge by John Scoville in Dark Hollow, twelve years before. The judge and Mrs. Scoville meet at Spencer's Folly and she shows him how, on the day of the murder, she saw the shadow of a man, whittling a stick and wearing a long peaked cap. The judge engages her and her daughter Reuther to live with him in his mysterious home. Deborah and her lawyer, Black, go to the police station and see the stick used to murder Etheridge. She discovers a broken knife-blade point embedded in it. Deborah and Reuther go to live with the judge. Deborah sees a portrait of Oliver, the judge's son, with a black band painted across the eyes. That night she finds, in Oliver's room, a cap with a peak like the shadowed one, and a knife with a broken blade-point. Anonymous letters and a talk with Miss Weeks increase her suspicions and fears. She finds that Oliver was in the ravine on the murder night. Black warns her and shows her other anonymous letters hinting at Oliver's guilt. In the court room the judge is handed an anonymous note. The note is picked up and read aloud. A mob follows the judge to his home. Deborah tells him why suspicion has been aroused against Oliver. The judge shows Deborah a statement written by Oliver years ago telling how he saw her husband murder Spencer at Spencer's Folly on the night the house was burned. A vain attempt to silence the anonymous letter writer is made.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

"I didn't ask to see the ladies," protested Flannagan, turning with a slinking gait toward the door.

If they only had let him go! If the judge in his new self-confidence had not been so anxious to deepen the effect and make any future repetition of the situation impossible!

"You understand the lady," he interposed, with the quiet dignity which was so imposing on the bench. "She has no sympathy with your ideas and no faith in your conclusions. She believes absolutely in my son's innocence."

"Do you, ma'am?" The man had turned and was surveying her with the dogged impudence of his class. "I'd like to hear you say it, if you don't mind, ma'am. Perhaps, then, I'll believe it."

"I—" she began, trembling so, that she failed to reach her feet, although she made one spasmodic effort to do so. "I believe—Oh, I feel ill! It's been too much—I—" her head fell forward, and she turned herself quite away from them all.

"You see, she ain't so eager, judge, as you thought," laughed the bill-poster, with a clumsy bow he evidently meant to be sarcastic.

"Oh, what have I done!" moaned Deborah, starting up as though she would fling herself after the retreating figure, now half way down the hall.

She saw in the look of the judge as he forcibly stopped her, and heard in the lawyer's whisper as he bounded past them both to see the fellow out: "Useless; nothing will bridle him now;" and finding no support for her despairing spirit either on earth or, as she thought, in heaven, she collapsed where she sat and fell unnoticed to the floor, where she lay prone at the feet of the equally unconscious figure of the judge, fixed in another attack of his peculiar complaint.

And thus the lawyer found them when he returned from closing the gate behind Flannagan.

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"I cannot say anything, I cannot do anything till I have had a few words with Mrs. Scoville. How soon do you think I can speak to her?"

"Not very soon. Her daughter says she is quite worn out. Would it not be better to give her a rest for tonight, judge?"

The judge, now quite recovered, but strangely shrunk and wan, showed no surprise at this request, odd as it was, on the lips of this honest but somewhat crabbed lawyer, but answered out of the fullness of his own heart and from the depths of his preoccupation:

"My necessity is greater than her. The change I see in her is inexplicable. One moment she was all fire and determination, satisfied of Oliver's innocence and eager to proclaim it. The next—but you were with us. You witnessed her hesitation—felt its force and what its effect was upon the damnable scamp who has our honor—the honor of the Ostranders under his tongue. Something must have produced this change. What? good friend, what?"

"I don't know any more than you do, Judge. But I think you are mistaken about the previous nature of her feelings. I noticed that she was not at peace with herself when she came into the room."

"What's that?" The tone was short, and for the first time irritable.

"The change, if there was a change, was not so sudden as you think. She looked troubled, and as I thought, irresolute when she came into the room."

"You don't know her; you don't know what passed between us. She was all right then, but—go to her, Black. She must have recovered by this time. Ask her to come here for a minute. I won't detain her. I will wait for her warning knock right here."

The judge had declared his necessity to be greater than hers, and after Mr. Black had subjected him to one of his most searching looks he decided that this was so, and quietly departed upon his errand. The judge left alone, sat, a brooding figure in his great chair, with no light in heart or mind to combat the shadows of approaching night settling heavier and heavier upon the room and upon himself with every slow passing and intolerable minute.

At last, when the final ray had departed and darkness reigned supreme, there came a low knock on the door. Then a troubled cry:

"Oh, judge, are you here?"

"Don't come any nearer; it is not necessary." A pause, then the quick question ringing hollow from the darkness: "Why have your doubts returned? Why are you no longer the woman you were when not an hour ago and in this very spot you cried, 'I will be Oliver's advocate!'" Then, as no answer came—as minutes passed, and still no answer came, he spoke again and added: "I know that you are ill and exhausted—broken between duty and sympathy; but you must answer me, Mrs. Scoville. My affairs won't wait. I must know the truth and all the truth before this day is over."

"You shall." Her voice sounded hollow, too, and, oh, how weary! "You allowed the document you showed me

She Lay at the Feet of the Unconscious Figure of the Judge.

to remain a little too long before my eyes. That last page—need I say it?"

"Say it."

"Shows—shows change, Judge Ostrander. Some words have been erased and new ones written in. They are not many, but—"

"I understand. I do not blame, you, Deborah." The words came after a pause and very softly, almost as softly as her own, but which had sounded its low knell of doom through the darkness. "Too many stumbling-blocks in your way, Deborah, too much to combat. The most trusting heart must give way under such a strain. That page was tampered with. I tampered with it myself. I am not expert at forgery. I had better have left it, as he wrote it." Then after another silence, he added, with a certain vehemence: "We will struggle no longer, either you or I. The boy must come home. Prepare Reuther, or, if you think best, provide a place for her where she will be safe from the storm which bids fair to wreck us here. No, don't speak; just ask Mr. Black to return, will you?"

When Mr. Black re-entered the study, it was to find the room lighted and the judge bent over the table, writing.

"You are going to send for Oliver?" he queried.

The judge hesitated, then motioning Black to sit, said abruptly:

"What is Andrews' attitude in this matter?"

Andrews was Shelby's district attorney.

Black's answer was like the man.

"I saw him for one minute an hour ago. I think, at present, he is inclined to be both deaf and dumb, but if he's driven to action, he will act. And, judge, the man Flannagan isn't going to stop where he is."

"Black, be merciful to my misery. What does this man know? Have you any idea?"

"No, judge, I haven't. He's as tight as a drum—and as noisy. It is possible—just possible that he's as empty. A few days will tell."

"I cannot wait for a few days. I hardly feel as if I could wait a few hours. Oliver must come, even if—if the consequences are likely to be fatal. An Ostrander once accused cannot skulk. Oliver has been accused and—send that!" he quickly cried, pulling forward the telegram he had written.

Mr. Black took up the telegram and read:

Come at once. Imperative. No delay and no excuse.

ARCHIBALD OSTRANDER.

"Mrs. Scoville will supply the address," continued the poor father. "You will see that it goes, and that its sending is kept secret. The answer, if any is sent, had better be directed to your office. What do you say, Black?"

"I am your friend, right straight through, judge. Your friend."

"And my boy's adviser?"

"I'm a surly fellow, judge. I have known you all these years, yet I've never expressed—never said what I even find it hard to say now, that—that my esteem is something more than esteem; that—that I'll do anything for you, judge."

"I—we won't talk of that, Black. Tell Mrs. Scoville to keep me informed—and bring me any message that may come. The boy, even if he leaves the first thing in the morning, cannot get here before tomorrow night."

"Not possibly."

"He will telegraph. I shall hear from him. O God! the hours I must wait; my boy! my boy!"

It was nature's irrepressible cry. Black pressed his hand and went out with the telegram.

CHAPTER XV.

He Must Be Found.

Next morning an agitated confab took place at the gate, or rather between the two front gates. Mr. Black rang for admittance, and Mrs. Scoville answered the call.

"One moment, Mrs. Scoville. How can I tell the judge! Young Ostrander is gone—fled the city, and I can get no clue to his whereabouts. I have been burning the telegraph wires ever since the first dispatch, and this is the result. Where is Reuther?"

"At Miss Weeks. I had to command her to leave me alone with the judge. It's the first time I ever spoke unkindly to her. Have you the messages with you?"

He bundled them into her hand.

"I will hand them in to him. We can do nothing less and nothing more. Then if he wants you, I will telephone."

"Mrs. Scoville—" she felt his hand laid softly on her shoulder—"there is some one else in this matter to consider besides Judge Ostrander."

"Reuther? Oh, don't I know it! She's not out of my mind a moment."

"Reuther is young, and has a gallant soul. I mean you, Mrs. Scoville, you. You are not to succumb to this trial. You have a future—a bright future—or should have. Do not endanger it by giving up all your strength now. It's precious, that strength, or would be—"

"He must be found! Oliver must be found!" How the words rung in her ears. She had handed in the messages to the waiting father; she had uttered a word or two of explanation, and then, at his request, had left him. But his last cry followed her: "He must be found!"

Mr. Black looked serious.

"Pride or hope?" he asked.

"Desperation," she responded, with a guilty look about her. "Possibly, some hope is in it, too. Perhaps, he thinks that any charge of this nature must fall before Oliver's manly appearance. Whatever he thinks, there is but one thing to do: Find Oliver."

"Mrs. Scoville, the police have started upon that attempt. I got the tip this morning."

"We must forestall them. To satisfy the judge, Oliver must come of his own accord to face these charges."

"It's a brave stock. If Oliver gets his father's telegram he will come."

"But how are we to reach him! We are absolutely in the dark."

"If I could go to Detroit, I might strike some clue; but I cannot leave the judge. Mr. Black, he told me this morning when I carried in his breakfast that he should see no one and go nowhere till I brought him word that Oliver was in the house. The hermit life has begun again. What shall we do? Advise me in this emergency, for I feel as helpless as a child—as a lost child."

"You say you cannot go to Detroit. Shall I go? Court is adjourned. I know of nothing more important than Judge Ostrander's peace of mind—unless it is yours. I will go if you say so."

"Will it avail? Let me think. I knew him well, and yet not well enough to know where he would be most likely to go under impulse."

"There is some one who knows him better than you do."

"Reuther? Oh, she mustn't be told—"

"Yes, she must. She's our one adviser. Go for her—or send me."

"It won't be necessary. There's her ring at the gate. But, oh, Mr. Black, think again before you trouble this fragile child of mine with doubts and questions which make her mother tremble."

"She has scurces of strength which you lack. She believes absolutely in Oliver's integrity. It will carry her through."

"Please let her in, Mr. Black. I will wait here while you tell her."

Mr. Black hurried from the room. When his form became visible on the walk without, Deborah watched him from where she stood far back in the room. A staff had been put in her hand, rough to the touch, but firm under pressure, and she needed such a staff. But she forgot gratitude and every lesser emotion in watching Reuther's expression. The young girl, running into her arms, burst out with the glad cry:

"Oliver is no longer in Detroit, but he's wanted here, and Mr. Black and I are going to find him. I think I know where to look. Get me ready, mother dear; we are going tonight."

"But," objected Deborah, "if you know where to look for him, why take the child? Why go yourself? Why not telegraph to these places?"

His answer was a look, quick, sharp and enigmatical enough to require explanation. He could not give it to her then, but later, when Reuther had left them, he said:

"Men who fly their engagements and secrete themselves, with or without a pretext, are not so easily reached. We shall have to surprise Oliver Ostrander, in order to place his father's message in his hands."

"You may be right. But Reuther? Can she stand the excitement—the physical strain?"

"You have the harder task of the two, Mrs. Scoville. Leave the little one to me. She shall not suffer."

Deborah's response was eloquent. It was only a look, but it made his harsh features glow and his hard eye soften.

But his thoughts, if not his hopes, received a check when, with every plan made and Reuther in trembling anticipation of the journey, he encountered the triumphant figure of Flannagan coming out of police headquarters.

His jaunty air, his complaisant nod, admitted of but one explanation. He had told his story to the chief authorities and been listened to. Proof that he had something of actual moment to tell them; something which the district attorney's office might feel bound to take up.

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A night of stars, seen through swaying treetops whose leaves crisping to their fall, murmured gently of vanished hopes and approaching death.

Below, a long, low building with a lighted window here and there, surrounded by a heavy growth of trees which are but the earnest of the illimitable stretch of the Adirondack woods which painted darkness on the encircling horizon.

Within, Reuther seated in the glow of a hospitable fire of great logs, talking earnestly to Mr. Black. As they were placed, he could see her much better than she could see him, his back being to the blaze and she, in its direct glare.

He could, therefore, study her features without offense, and this he did steadily and with deep interest, all the while she was talking. He was looking for signs of physical weakness or fatigue; but he found none. The pallor of her features was a natural pallor, and in their expression, new forces were becoming apparent, which gave him encouragement, rather than anxiety, for the adventure whose most trying events lay still before them.

This is what she was saying:

"I cannot point to any one man of the many who have been about us ever since we started north. But that we have been watched and our route followed, I feel quite convinced. But, as you saw, no one besides ourselves left the cars at this station, and I am beginning to hope that we shall remain unmolested till we can take the trip to Tempest lodge. How far is it, Mr. Black?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Pretty and Popular Shirt Waists

The women of America, at least, are faithfully devoted to the sensible and smart shirt waist. Manufacturers of these essentials of the wardrobe have entered the field with models very close to the original design and have found them more heartily appreciated than ever. These waists are cut with a masculine severity of line, of the softest and most supple silks, and finished with hemstitching and needlework, decorative buttons and other items of daintiness in detail that proclaim them as utterly feminine.

Wash silks and crepe de chine are the favorite materials for shirt waists. They are cut with high or convertible collars, which must be provided with supporting wires if they are to stand up. Sleeves are long and finished with cuffs.

The three waists pictured here may be accepted as correct in style without any misgivings. The first one is of crepe de chine with hemstitched seams. The fronts are fulled on to the narrow yoke. The straight collar supports a second collar of embroidered batiste which opens with wings at the front. The cuffs are deep, close-fitting and plain, finished at the edge with machine hemstitching. Small jet buttons fasten the front.

At the right a similar waist has a narrow panel down the front, fastening to the left side with flat pearl buttons. The plain cuffs are sloped, and fasten with buttons, also. The choker collar may be protected by a dainty embroidered turn-over band.

White wash silk with narrow black and gray stripes is used for the mannish waist shown below the others. It is perfectly plain, with collar that may be worn either closed or open at the front. Pearl buttons fasten the front and the cuffs. The latter are made to turn back.

The new waists are cool and very easy to launder. They are washed in warm suds and ironed when partially dry. It is the simplest of processes. Altogether the new waists have everything to recommend them.

Gown of Semitransparent Fabric

The pretty gown shown in the picture is developed in a net-top lace with heavy pattern of embroidered flowers and scalloped edges. It would look just as well made of shadow lace, voile, embroidered batiste, chiffon, or any other of those semitransparent fabrics for which women show an increasing partiality. All the summery printed mulls and the new voiles of fancy weave are at the disposal of the copyist who fancies this model.

Since it is the airiness and coloring of the fabric more than anything else that counts in a gown of this character it may be made to cost much or little. For nets, laces and voiles an underslip of silk is needed, and a slip of this kind looks best under any of the transparent materials. But if one must practice strict economy the underslip may be of some of the silky looking cotton fabrics or of mull with good effect.

An underslip of pink taffeta supports the flounces that make up the skirt in this dress, and the fichulike drapery of the bodice. This fichu falls over a wide girdle of pink ribbon with bow and looped ends at the back. The girdle is supported by a shaped and boned foundation, and laces down the front with a silk cord.

The silk skirt is moderately wide and finished at the bottom with a box-plaited ruching of the silk, of which there are glimpses back of the scalloped flounce. The three flounces are moderately full and overlap only to the depth of the scallop. There are no sleeves in the slip, but the lace is gathered over the shoulder and caught under the arm, forming a short bell sleeve.

Stockings to match, one must have to be in the mode this season. These are of fine silk. But the slippers may match the gown in color or not. They are likely to be of bronze leather.

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

Colors and Complexions.

Light blue makes blonde complexions look ashen.

Dark blue sets off a blonde complexion in high relief by supplying a suitable background.

Blue is unbecoming to a brunette, unless her cheeks be florid. If she be sallow it makes her face look tawny.

Green has the same effect as blue upon brunettes, but makes the cheeks of a fair face look pinker.

Red heightens the effect of pale brunette beauty.

Yellow is highly becoming to a pale brunette, especially in artificial light. It softens an olive skin and gives it a creamy tint.

Silk in Hatdom.

This cleverest play of flower and leaf cannot be bought right away in the millinery markets; it has to be concocted by the artist in hats.

The silk hat is not only a very nice feature just now, but almost a necessity, because the straw-hat-making quarters are hampered by the lack of both dyes and plait. The dye question will no doubt be settled to the satisfaction of the manufacturers in time, but meanwhile, until the difficult financial side of it has been adjusted, our choice in hats must be less in straw than in silk.

Fortunately, fashion is more set on silk, so that the side of it we call exclusive will not suffer from thwarted inclination. The clever gay trimmings in color are not asking for straw, but for a dull silk background.

Deception.

It many times falls out that we seem ourselves much deceived in others because we first deceived ourselves.—Sir Philip Sidney.

Official Denial

No War Tax on Homestead Land in Canada

The report that a war tax is to be placed on Homestead lands in Western Canada having been given considerable circulation in the United States, this is to advise all enquirers that no such tax has been placed, nor is there any intention to place a war tax of any nature on such lands. (Signed) W. D. Scott, Supt. of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada. March 15th, 1915.

Marvel of Training.

Rose had called on her afternoon out to see her friend, Arabella. Arabella's mistress had just purchased a parrot, and Rose was much interested in the bird.

"Birds is shore sensible," she observed. "You kin learn them anything. I uster work for a lady that had a bird in a clock, an' when it was time to tell de time ob day it uster come out an' say 'cuckoo' jest as many times as de time was."

"Go along. Yo' doan say so," said Arabella, incredulously.

"Shore thing," replied Rose, "and de mos' wonderful part was dat it was only a wooden bird, too."—Harper's.

For Identification Purposes Only.

"Gentlemen," began the speaker, thus putting himself en rapport with his auditors, flattering their self-esteem, though committing the crime of uttering a pale, white lie.

"Gentlemen," he repeated, thus rubbing it in, "I desire to call your kind attention to the four poems I am about to recite."

A sub rosa groan escaped the tethered audience.

"Only the first of these poems," announced the speaker, "is mine. The other three are by Longfellow.

With an audible sigh of relief, the audience settled back, prepared to endure the worst.

Willing to Please.

"Now, you, as superintendent of a school, object to this saloon and dance hall?"

"I do."

"And why do you object?"

"On account of the establishment's proximity."

"Well, if they agree to cut that out every night at eleven o'clock, will that satisfy you?"

FOR IDEAL OF RECREATION

Subject That Is Worthy of Much More Study Than Is Generally Given to It.

What women throughout the country still need is a freer association with other women whose standards, social, intellectual and moral, are higher than their own, writes Anne Morgan in the Woman's Home Companion. As a people we are too inclined to seek a lower standard for our recreation, to level down. We seek a companionship where no intellectual effort is necessary; we choose a theater where the entertainment furnished is a popular musical comedy, rather than a play with literary merit, interpreted by talented actors. Certain popular magazines with large circulation contain stories and articles utterly valueless in quality; other publications containing literary and historical contributions by serious authors reach but few homes. In our recreation, as in our work, we want immediate results with a minimum of effort; to be entertained generally means to be relaxed. The splendid rest and refreshment that comes with a great, but different, intellectual or physical effort is known only to the few. The ideal life would be for the daily existence to be so ordered that no definite holiday time would be necessary—each twenty-four hours would bring its own period of work, play and rest. In our complicated civilization, however, this is well nigh impossible. It has been humorously said that the only person who really needs a vacation is the man who has just returned from one.

Waiting for Soap.

"Soap Clubs Held Here" is the notice in a shop window in Soho. On inquiry I found that the clubs were similar to the hat and feather clubs which abound in Whitechapel and Bethnal Green. The money is pooled together every week for soap, and there is a draw who shall have it first. You may be lucky and get your soap the first week you join the club, or you may have to wait three months. But a glance at Soho waiting for soap suggests that it is not such a terrible hardship as it appears at first sight.

HARDSHIPS OF THE DESERT

By Comparison the Average Man Will Think His Lot Cast in Most Pleasant Places.

We are almost across the desert, and I am really becoming interested. The difficulties some folks work under are enough to make many of us ashamed. In the very center of the desert is a little settlement called Eden Valley. Imagination must have had a heap to do with its name, but one thing is certain: the serpent will find the crawling rather bad if he attempts to enter this Eden, for the sand is hot; the alkali and the cactus are there, so it must be a serpentless Eden. The settlers have made a long canal and bring their water many miles. They say the soil is splendid, and they don't have much stone; but it is such a flat place! I wonder how they get the water to run when they irrigate.

We saw many deserted homes. Hope's skeletons they are, with their yawning doors and windows like eyeless sockets. Some of the houses, which looked as if they were deserted, held families. We camped near one such. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy and I went up to the house to buy some eggs. A hopeless-looking woman came to the door. The hot winds and the alkali dust had tanned her skin and bleached her hair; both were a gray-brown. Her eyes were blue, but were so tired-looking that I could hardly see for the tears.

"No," she said, "we ain't got no eggs. We ain't got no chickens. You see this ground is sandy, and last year the wind blowed awful hard and all the grain blowed out, so we didn't have no chance to raise chickens. We had no feed and no money to buy feed, so we had to kill our chickens to save their lives. We et 'em. They would have starved anyway."—The Woman Homesteader, in the Atlantic.

Advantage in Being Poor.

The poor are often overworked; but they suffer less than many among the rich, who have no work to do, no interesting object to fill up life, to satisfy the infinite cravings of man for action.—William Ellery Channing.